

# WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL



## ***Drought Efforts***

The WGA and WSWC have led the way in promoting coordinated drought preparedness, with an emphasis on sharing data and improving drought forecasts.

The WGA was instrumental in establishing the *NATIONAL INTEGRATED DROUGHT INFORMATION SYSTEM (NIDIS)*, which Congress enacted in 2006 to develop an interagency, multi-partner approach to drought monitoring, forecasting, and early warning led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The WGA and WSWC have been integral partners in helping implement NIDIS, including providing an early warning system.

The WGA and NOAA also provide a *Quarterly Climate Impacts and Drought Outlook* on drought conditions in the West. The *Outlook* is part of a 2011 agreement between the two organizations aimed at improving the development and delivery of drought and climate services to western stakeholders. The intent is to help avoid or mitigate drought losses.

## **WHO WE ARE**

### ***The Western Governors' Association (WGA)***

The WGA is an independent, nonprofit organization representing the governors of 19 states and three US-Flag Pacific islands. Through the WGA, the Western Governors identify and address key policy and governance issues that include natural resources, the environment, human services, economic development, intergovernmental relations, and international relations.

The Western Governors have long recognized the importance of water in the West and have led with several projects and policies on water-related matters, including:

- Drought Preparedness
- The Energy-Water Nexus
- Indian Water Rights Settlements
- Water Infrastructure Strategies
- Water Right Transfers

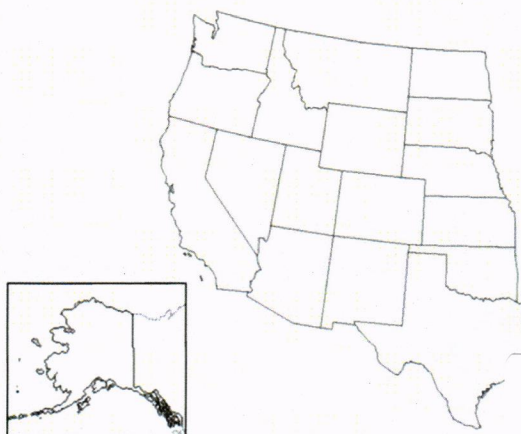
### ***The Western States Water Council (WSWC)***

The WSWC serves as a resource and advisor on water policy issues for the governors of 18 western states. It fosters cooperation between its member states on water issues, and provides a forum for them to express their collective voice before Congress and the Administration. The WSWC is also formally affiliated with the WGA, and both organizations work closely to develop and implement policies regarding water resource management in the West.

The governors are *ex-officio* WSWC members and appoint members to represent their individual states. Members serve at the pleasure of their respective

governors and include state natural resource department directors, water resource agency directors, state engineers, state water quality managers, assistant attorneys general, private practice attorneys, and other western water experts.

Most WSWC members are key policymakers with access to their governor.



WATER POLICY INTERIM  
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## **WHAT WE DO**

The WGA and WSWC carry out a variety of efforts to support the western states' water management efforts. Notable examples include:

- **STATE WATER RIGHTS:** Numerous past and present WGA and WSWC efforts are designed to preserve the primary authority of the states to allocate and manage their waters, and protect private property rights.
- **WATER TRANSFERS:** In December 2012, the WGA and WSWC released a report on voluntary, intrastate water rights transfers in the West that identifies tools that states and others can use to avoid or mitigate the impacts of transfers on agricultural economies and rural communities.
- **INDIAN WATER RIGHTS:** For over 30 years, the WGA, the WSWC, and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) have worked together as part of an Ad Hoc Group on Indian Water Rights to educate Congress and the Administration about the need to settle Indian reserved water rights claims through negotiation. The WSWC and NARF also hold a biennial symposium on settlements, and the WSWC maintains a summary table of Congressionally-authorized settlements on its website.\*
- **WATER REUSE:** In June 2012, the WSWC published a report in the *West-Northwest Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* describing the water reuse programs in 17 western states.\*
- **WATER-RELATED DATA:** The WGA and WSWC have long worked with Congress and the Administration to secure adequate federal funding for programs that support state water management, such as USGS' stream-gaging system, NRCS' Snow Survey program, NASA's Landsat satellites, and various NOAA programs.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES:** The WGA and WSWC sponsor a biennial symposium on strategies to meet our present and future infrastructure needs. Further, they promote the expenditure of Reclamation Fund receipts for their authorized purposes, as well as EPA's State Revolving Funds and other federal water development and protection programs.
- **SYMPOSIA AND WORKSHOPS:** The WGA and WSWC sponsor a variety of symposia and workshops to bring together stakeholders from around the West to discuss water challenges. In 2013, the WGA and/or WSWC held meetings on improving drought prediction, quantifying drought impacts, Indian water rights settlements, and the energy-water nexus.\*

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Demands on the West's limited water resources are growing and are complicated by population growth, extreme weather, and increasingly complex federal laws and regulations. These issues magnify the importance of regional cooperation to address common problems.

### ***Water Data Exchange (WaDE)***

The WaDE project is a cooperative effort between the Western States Water Council (WSWC), the Western Governors' Association (WGA), and the Department of Energy (DOE) National Laboratories. Initial work on water availability conducted by the National Labs in 2011 and 2012 highlighted the lack of and difficulty accessing data necessary for comprehensive, regional analyses. In 2012 the WSWC began the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) project as a means to address this gap and access state data.

The focus of WaDE is to enable the states to share important water data (water availability estimates, water use by sector, and water allocation data) with each other, federal agencies and the public using a common format.

WaDE allows for easy, cost-effective access to state water planning data to facilitate studies and assessments in a timely manner. It positions the states ahead of time to answer important questions about water resources in the West on a regional and national scale.

Western Governors' Association  
1600 Broadway, Suite 1700  
Denver, CO 80202  
303-623-9378  
[www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org)

Western States Water Council  
5296 South Commerce Drive, Suite 202  
Murray, UT 84107  
801-685-2555  
[www.westernstateswater.org](http://www.westernstateswater.org)